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A
NARRATIVE
OF AN
ASSAULT,
AND OTHER
Disgraceful Outrages,
LATELY COMMITTED ON
A PEACEABLE INDIVIDUAL,
BY A SET OF
MILITARY HEROES,
AT THE
Theatre,
IN
LYNN REGIS.

BY W. CURTIS.

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NARRATIVE

ASSAULT

Disgraceful Outrages

A PEACEABLE INDIVIDUAL



Chronic

PAINT RECORD

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PAINT RECORD

TO
THE MAYOR
AND
MAGISTRACY
OF
THE BOROUGH
OF
LYNN REGIS,
Norfolk.

GENTLEMEN,

A MOST daring and infamous outrage having been committed on my person, within the jurisdiction of which you are bound by your oaths to be the guardians of the peace ; it behoves you to remove the odium of being passively implicated in the nefarious deed. On the evening when I was so grossly maltreated, there was not a single magistrate upon the spot to interpose in my behalf: so
B *far,*

far, gentlemen, you are exonerated from being confederates in the guilt. But on the second night, when it was universally known that another attempt would be made to disturb the public tranquillity, not a solitary precaution on your parts was taken, to divert its execution. Here, gentlemen, I am compelled to observe, your characters considerably abate of their accustomed lustre.

Trusting that you may be able to assign reasons for your conduct, at present totally out of the precincts of my limited comprehension, I shall take my leave of you, and proceed to a statement of disgraceful facts, that even a Court of Justiciary would blush to see recorded.

With the profoundest respect,

I am, Gentlemen,

Your most obedient

And very humble servant,

W. CURTIS.

A
PLAIN STATEMENT

OF

Incontrovertible Facts.

AMUSING myself one evening at the theatre, with my family and friends, that musical, mouthful of mockery, "God save the King," was on its passage, to make way for a more pleasing farce. Although I have uniformly considered these theatrical supplications to the Deity, as the effusions of weak or distempered minds, I sat quietly in my place, musing on the dupes and scarecrows of the day, without attempting a solitary effort to hiss them into reason. Thus absorbed in contemplation, I omitted pulling off my hat, while a set of royal idolaters, offering the incense of their savory skulls, stood bare-headed, chanting disobedience to a mandate of their Maker.

In this peaceable situation, a man, whom the parish register calls *Walter Partridge*,

and who sat immediately behind me, insisted, in very indecent terms, that I should change my sitting to an erect position, and stand uncovered, like his brother fools.—To this requisition, so preposterous in its nature, and commanded in the language of a blackguard, I peremptorily refused compliance. He then cried loudly to the performers on the stage, to suspend the song, and most earnestly exhorted all loyal, king-loving people, to assist him in pulling off my hat, and hurling me into the pit. Like the whistle of a pickpocket, his call instantly collected his brother ruffians to the scene of action. I was in a few seconds in the centre of a gang of military bloodhounds, emulous who should treat me with the grossest insult. A fellow, who, from his language and appearance, I conceived to be a corporal, and whose name I afterwards discovered was Henry Pawlet, ran his fist against my face, with this beautiful exclamation:—"You damn'd, infamous villain, pull off your hat this instant, or I will knock your teeth down your throat." At the same time Partridge (whom, by way of distinction, I shall sometimes dignify by the

the name of *Fungus*) seizing my hat with one hand, and my shirt-collar with the other, in conjunction with *Silesia* Wright, and other military heroes, came to the humane resolution to throw me into the pit. —As near as I can recollect, I was about five minutes engaged with this polite banditti, when my friends, beginning to perceive that matters put on a very serious aspect, came most humanely to my assistance, and rescued me from the terrors of a broken neck.

In my conflict with *Fungus*, when he had assailed both my collar and my hat, I applied my right hand to his abundant nose, and holding him near a minute in that degrading posture, his valour oozing through his nostrils, he quietly let go his hold, standing like *Patience* on a monument, grinning at *Grief*.

In such a scene of general confusion, it is impossible to recollect half the outrages that were perpetrated by these barbarians; I shall therefore briefly say, that one of these military gentry, in attempting to take his dagger from his side, wounded a young man in the wrist, who came to my assist-

ance; that I had a son with me, about seven years old, whom both Partridge and Pawlet made many attempts to wrest from my protection, and turn into the pit; that there were three ladies with me in the box, and that the brutal behaviour of these savages threw two of them into violent hysterics, from which it was with great difficulty they were so far recovered as to be removed to their habitations.

As soon as these ladies were out of the theatre, and the nosle business of Partridge had in some measure silenced my opponents, another *Thing*, of the same name, though of a different covey, approached me with the specious appearance of a friend, telling me, that if I sat still, either with or without my hat, as I myself thought proper, that he conceived the tumult in the house would soon subside. Although this intimation was quite unnecessary, having at that time my hat upon my head, I considered it as an act of civility from a stranger, and mentioned him afterwards to my friends, as a singular exception to the rest of his fraternity. But, lo! on the morrow I was informed that
this

this serjeant Partridge, or ensign Partridge, or whatever may be his distinction, came into the box with all the hostile ferocity of his brother bravos ; but, that meeting with the small impediment of being knocked down in his passage, the lion became instantly converted to a lamb. There was also another Partridge in the confederacy, who was brother to Fungus ; but this gentleman haply belonged not to the troop of war. Although one of God's vicegerents, he expressed, in the family language, a strong predilection that I should explore the pit. In the next box to me sat a colonel Gould, who, probably from its vicinity to the seat of war, for that night put on the semblance of civility.

When my unshaken perseverance, and the assistance of my friends, had nearly brought the riot to its exit, this colonel Gould told his brethren of the blade, that their conduct had been extremely reprehensible, and that if there was any personal disagreement between them and me, they should have chosen a very different place to have had it settled. This, however, not being the case, as I had never

before affronted or been affronted by any of the party, the colonel's censure attached as it deserved.

My antagonists now sneaking behind the scenes, and a common soldier, who came to their assistance, being driven from the box, I was left to the quiet enjoyment of my seat and my hat, and the performers proceeded without farther molestation or obstruction. Thus ended the adventures of Friday evening the 7th of March.

So public a riot, it may naturally be expected, became the general topic of the succeeding day. The female old women, marvelling at the irreverence of my conduct, decreed that my head should be shaved, and that I should go without a hat all the rest of my life; while the old women in breeches, calling it sedition verging upon treason, recommended the magistracy of the borough to take cognisance of my crime. I have, however, just received a letter from the worthy town-clerk of the corporation, intimating, that after the most diligent investigation of the statutes

statutes at large, and other documents of legal information, he can find no law that authorizes one man to pull off the hat of another, without his free consent ; or, in case of a refusal, that he should, *nolens volens*, be compelled to swallow his teeth. Although these were my exact sentiments at the time of the affray, I feel peculiarly happy in having them corroborated by so learned a friend.

A few evenings prior to this outrage, when the farce of *Patrick in Prussia* was performed at the same theatre, one of the heroes of the drama came upon the stage, reading the following letter: " Here I am in Silesia, and like the king of my country am determined to murder man, woman, and child." A captain Wright of the Nottinghamshire militia, conceiving Silesia to be a town in Wales, set up a most violent hiss, declaring aloud his determination of resenting so gross an outrage on the virtues of his illustrious master. The performer, as might be naturally expected, was so extremely disconcerted by this unexpected

expected opposition, that for near a minute he was at a total stand: but the audience, being rather better geographers than the captain, took fire at the insult, and by the most unbounded plaudits silenced his pop-gun battery, and again restored tranquillity and order. Hence this son of Mars has acquired the name of *Silisia Wright*, which will probably stick to him all the rest of his life.—

Proceed we now to the operations of the second campaign.

Without the slightest preconception with a second person, I dauntless braved the fury of my foes. I entered the theatre without a single companion at my elbow, but was happy to find that a party of gentlemen, resenting the indignities I had previously sustained, occupied a whole range of side boxes to protect me from farther insult. I had armed myself with a short stick, determined upon marking some of the beautiful sconces of my assailants, but my phalanx of friends rendered the precaution useless.

At

At the usual period of infatuation, the performers were once more exhorted to turn up their eyes, and pray to God for the king. To this frenzy of loyalty, I made not the slightest opposition, but sat still with my hat on to the end of the hymn. As soon as it was finished, that prodigy of valour, colonel Gould, who sat in an opposite box, gave the signal for a riot; he pointed his finger at me with a hiss that would have abashed the paramour of Eve, and the minor serpents became instantly the echos of their master. This kind of distant skirmishing was much better adapted to the prowess of our hero's, than a contact battle. Content with this valorous atchievement, the colonel, and the chief of his corps, kept snug in their entrenchments; but Fungus Partridge, parson ditto, and a stupid boy of the name of Hales, were dispatched to reconnoitre. Having nothing to fear from this insignificant trio, we permitted them, without molestation, to enter our camp. After they had been with us about a minute, I was commanded by
the

the minister of peace to pull off my hat, and, on my indignant refusal of compliance, he observed, that as I chose to be refractory, he meant to take the trouble upon himself. Fungus now cocked his hat, and looked fierce, and the boy Hales conceited himself a hero. But, alas! how were the mighty fallen! they were offered this only alternative, either instantly to depart in peace, or be kicked into the street: it is quite unnecessary to mention their election.

Thus were these royal rioters defeated by a few friends of peace and good government, and whose greatest pride is being considered to have deserved well of their country. I have known the day, when the most trivial usurpation of the military over the civil power of these realms, would have been contemptuously resisted; but these cursed conventionalists, not satisfied with inverting the order of things in their own country, have actually trans-

transmitted the poison to their neighbours.

“ O Lord our God arise,

“ Scatter our enemies.”

Such heroes as Partridge and Pawlet, calling thus upon the Almighty to get up and frighten the French, reminds me of the fable of Jupiter and the drayman. It being so truly apposite to my subject, I shall take the liberty, as far as my memory will permit me, to recite it to my readers. —A certain drayman, having driven his cart into a quagmire, set up a most hideous howl, imploring the assistance of Jupiter to extricate him from his difficulties; but the god, laughing at his presumption, told him, that if he earnestly clapped his shoulder to the wheel, it would have a much greater effect than all his supplications.

Would Omnipotence condescend to notice such insignificant reptiles as those I have been describing, I should conceive he would reply to them in the language of Jupiter, by recommending Flanders as a much properer theatre to accomplish their request.

I should

I should have mentioned, in the events of the first evening, that between eleven and twelve o'clock, Pawlet waited upon me with a verbal message from Partridge, desiring me to meet him the next morning, to give him satisfaction for the liberty I had taken with his nose. I told him in reply, that he was infinitely too contemptible to be treated like a gentleman, and that risking my life against his, was like staking a bank-note against a piece of brown paper; that such *Things* as he, were certainly much better dead than alive; but that having a wife and family myself, and conceiving it more to their comfort that I should die a natural death, I should take the liberty to refuse the combat. He told me, he came to me as a gentleman, and requested particularly that I would keep my temper. To this I answered, that he certainly then must have altered his habit; for when he was at the theatre, he was one of the greatest blackguards of the groupe. In this amicable disposition we wished each other a good night, and parted.

I have

I have likewise to record, to the honour of the Nottinghamshire militia, that a captain Bonnel of that respectable corps, observing me standing uncovered after the prayer for the king was finished, said to one of his comrades, " So, the bugger has at last pulled off his hat." I am not sufficiently master of the slang dialect to comprehend his meaning; but I am credibly informed he did not intend it as a compliment.

On Monday the 17th instant, I received the following letter by the penny post, in a feigned hand, written on gilt paper :

" You Rascal Curtis,

" We have only just heard you intend in a publication
 " to write against some of our officers. We caution
 " you, that if a disrespectful word is mentioned against
 " any one of them, from the colonel downwards, every
 " bone in your damn'd democratical skin shall be broke.
 " I write this in presence of fifteen brother soldiers, who
 " have all sworn to be revenged of you. The whole
 " corps detest your vile principles; so take care what
 " you do, for by God you shall be roughly handled: by
 " night or by day we will have you.

" *A Soldier in the Notts. Regt.*"

" *Lynn, Saturday Eveng.*"

This

This letter needs no comment. The original is at the service of any gentleman who wishes to peruse it.

Having committed the challenge and the assault to the investigation of the law, and my own conduct thus to the candid decisions of my readers, I shall now take the liberty to make my bow.

W. CURTIS.

LYNN REGIS,
18th March, 1794.

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IN A SHORT TIME WILL BE PUBLISHED,

THE
LIFE AND ADVENTURES

OF

Colonel Concord:

Showing,

How he was taken prisoner at ———, on the
—— of April, 1775; and how he was unfor-
tunately shot below his posteriors prior to his
captivity.—How he was a man of great speed,
and had he not accidentally fell over a jack-
ass, he would not have been caught by either
the ball or his enemies.—How the ———s be-
came in great wrath at the sight of him; how
they tarred him and feathered him, and how
beautifully he looked in his new regimentals.—
How he has challenged the Stadtholder, to run
from Menin to Antwerp, against any of his mi-
litary subjects, for his own sum; with a long
etcetera of other How's of the same delicate
complexion, equally interesting and enter-
taining.

Colonel Concord:

How he was taken prisoner and how he was
of April, 1775, and how he was
told that below his position
especially—How he was a man of great
and had he not been over a
71 APR 66
and he would not have been caught by
the ball or his enemies—How the
came in great wrath at the sight of them, how
they turned him and feathered him, and how
beautifully he looked in his new regiment—
How he has challenged the Stadholder, to run
from Maastricht to Antwerp, against any of his
hired soldiers, for his own gun, with a long
barrel of other How's of the same calibre
corresponding equally interesting and enter-

